



Social class and transnational human capita: how middle and upper class parents prepare their children for globalization

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Social class and transnational human capital: how middle and upper class parents prepare their children for globalization, by Jürgen Gerhards, Silke Hans, and Sören Carlson, London, Routledge, 2017, 216 pp., £90.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-138-23202-0

The book by professor Jürgen Gerhards and his colleagues presents a comprehensive analysis of the concept of transnational human capital in the German educational environment. The book was previously published in German, and part of it appeared also as an article in *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*.

The authors build their approach around the assumption that the theory of Pierre Bourdieu about class distinction and human capital needs to be expanded and updated in the era of globalization. Gerhards and colleagues include the aspect of globalization into Bourdieu's terminology on different types of Human Capital and different ways of obtaining what they call the 'transnational human capital' (11) (THC). They focus on mechanisms of acquiring such capital using the example of international language capital. Gerhards and colleagues argue that class membership is the key in acquiring this new form of capital. Their central question is: What is the direct impact of the possession of transnational human capital on emerging social inequalities?

The book is structured into seven chapters in four coherent sections. The Prologue introduces the theoretical framework and the current state of research. They pronounce the hypothesis that the globalization process transforms transnational human capital into an ever more important resource interconnecting the current world, or at least extremely facilitating actions of interconnection. The authors define language skills as the cornerstone of such competences and examine the effectivity of acquiring transnational human capital by focusing on bilingual pre-school education and study programmes that allow students to spend up to a year abroad. This choice was based on the success of these forms of education demonstrated in previous research. They study the impact of early-stage THC accumulation on the behaviour in the learning process later in life.

The five following chapters present arguments on the changing contexts and the effect of these changes. The authors show that the interaction between societies and world regions has increased enormously, and the image of the world as a 'cluster of isolated societies' (2) is no longer an adequate representation of reality. Because the acquisition of THC is not an automatic process, the concept of Bourdieu's theory and 'illusio' of providing a common good (7) are used to study the social aspects of agencies providing language study programmes abroad. These study programmes are divided into three homologous products, depending on the economic situation of the client. The authors focus on how and why the importance of transnational human capital has grown in the past decades. Their analysis of the international job market based on job offers from newsletters includes a range of 50 years between 1960 and 2010. Interviews with parents are used to demonstrate concrete opportunities of parenthood with regard to THC transmission on the micro level. Qualitative reconstruction of family conditions, for instance concrete parenting practices, are built on the basis of interviews with parents in Chapter 4.

The Epilogue of the third section of the book provides a summary of the findings and conclusions and ideas for future research. In addition to analyses in Chapter 3, a detailed description of the data and methods used in the analysis is provided in the Appendix.

The values and resources supporting acquiring of THC highlighted in the book are high income, education, international contacts of parents and close family in contrast to families from lower classes, which have lower access to THC. Gerhards and colleagues also point out the importance of opportunity structures and conflicts in families. Their processual analysis results in a typology of three types of families: the transnationally accomplished, the excluded and the ambitious.

Investment in THC has positive returns for the individual as well as for the society and according to the main argument of this research, is the base of a new kind of social inequalities.

Transformation of THC into other forms of capital increases the chances for success abroad as well as at home. A significant increase of the value of THC on the job market is especially notable in the technological progress and transfer of technologies, and this will continue to be so. The growing value of THC will increase the number of people willing to pay for its acquisition.

If we look at factors analysed in the book, it can be surprising why the authors do not use research in personality psychology of students which plays an important role in decision-making and has an impact on the selection of certain fields of study. More generally, we may query whether the authors do not overestimate the role of THC. The differences in THC can be seen as just a relatively new demonstration of old social inequalities. These controversies can be an inspiration for future research not necessarily exclusively in sociology but also in the fields of psychology or economy.

The book offers a smart combination of qualitative and quantitative research. Nevertheless, the authors evaluate their research as a 'conclusion in the subjunctive' (168), as they introduce their idea of an ideal data-set for THC research and ideas for future research. The structure and also the style of the book make the reading engaging and comprehensible even for the wider public. The authors on the one hand avoid too much field-specific language while describing existing theories, empirical perspectives and their own way, on the other hand they do not succumb to temptation to disregard important details and diversity. This book makes an important contribution to fields as diverse as international student mobility, transnational theories and stratification research, thus emphasizing the need for a new look at existing theories and the importance of a concept of international education.

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After Europe, by Ivan Krastev, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017, 120 pp., £16.99 (hbk), ISBN 978-0-8122-4943-9

The somewhat apocalyptic title of this volume is in keeping with its provocative, and at times, frustrating content. In it, Krastev draws parallels between the current plight of the EU and the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire almost exactly 100 years ago. By failing to address, let alone answer the same fundamental problems, that led to its demise, he asks how it is possible for the EU to unite nations of divergent ideals and traditions in a way that each of them can continue its own particular life and progress while at the same time limiting its national sovereignty enough to make peaceful and effective cooperation possible.

The probable ultimate disintegration of the Union is at the centre of the author's concern: or is it? Krastev's ambition is neither to save the EU nor to mourn it;

but I am someone who believes that the disintegration train has already left Brussels station – and who fears that it will doom the continent to disarray and global irrelevance. It will likely transform a sympathetic environment of tolerance and openness to one characterised by a bullying narrow-mindedness. (10)

The author argues that in recent years, the EU elites have come to realise that although its political model is admired, it is unlikely to become universal or even spread to its immediate neighbours; that the old continent has lost both its centrality in global politics and the confidence of Europeans themselves. 'The European project has lost its teleological appeal and the idea of a United States of Europe is less inspiring than at any moment in the last fifty years'. (9)